

**Preliminary Amendment of U.S. National Stage for International Application
PCT/EP00/06161 filed July 1, 2000**

In the Claims:

Please add new claims 19-37, as follows:

--19. (New) A process for preparing a crosslinker-free composition, said process comprising:

(a) providing an aqueous mixture of a biopolymer, wherein the aqueous mixture has a viscosity of from 1,000 mPas to 100,000 mPas;

(b) combining a precipitant with the aqueous mixture to form a crosslinker-free biopolymer composition; and

(c) dewatering the crosslinker-free biopolymer composition to form a crosslinker-free three-dimensional structure.--

--20. (New) The process according to claim 19, wherein the aqueous mixture is present in a state selected from the group consisting of solutions and homogenous suspensions.--

--21. (New) The process according to claim 19, wherein the biopolymer is present in an amount of from 0.1 to 15% by weight, based on the aqueous mixture.--

--22. (New) The process according to claim 19, wherein the aqueous mixture has a pH value of from 1 to 12.--

--23. (New) The process according to claim 19, wherein the aqueous mixture has a viscosity of from 10,000 mPas to 40,000 mPas.--

--24. (New) The process according to claim 19, wherein the precipitant comprises an aqueous solution selected from the group consisting of aqueous solutions of hydrogen carbonates, carbonates, hydrogen phosphates, hydroxides of alkali metals, alkaline earth metals, ammonia and organic nitrogen bases, and combinations thereof.--

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--25. (New) The process according to claim 19, wherein the precipitant comprises an aqueous solution of sodium hydrogen carbonate.--

--26. (New) The process according to claim 19, wherein the precipitant comprises an aqueous solution selected from the group consisting of aqueous solutions of mineral acids, organic carboxylic acids, and combinations thereof.--

--27. (New) The process according to claim 19, wherein the dewatering of the crosslinker-free biopolymer composition comprises freeze-drying.--

--28. (New) The process according to claim 19, further comprising combining one or more auxiliaries or additives with the aqueous mixture prior to dewatering.--

--29. (New) The process according to claim 19, further comprising combining one or more auxiliaries or additives with the crosslinker-free composition subsequent to dewatering.--

--30. (New) A process for preparing a crosslinker-free composition, said process comprising:

(a) providing an aqueous mixture of a biopolymer, wherein the aqueous mixture has a viscosity of from 10,000 mPas to 40,000 mPas and a pH value of from 1 to 12;

(b) combining a precipitant selected from the group consisting of aqueous solutions of hydrogen carbonates, carbonates, hydrogen phosphates, hydroxides of alkali metals, alkaline earth metals, ammonia and organic nitrogen bases, and combinations thereof, with the aqueous mixture to form a crosslinker-free biopolymer composition; and

(c) freeze-drying the crosslinker-free biopolymer composition to form a crosslinker-free three-dimensional structure.--

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--31. (New) A crosslinker-free, biopolymer composition prepared by the process according to claim 19.--

--32. (New) A crosslinker-free, biopolymer composition prepared by the process according to claim 24.--

--33. (New) A crosslinker-free, biopolymer composition prepared by the process according to claim 27.--

--34. (New) A crosslinker-free, biopolymer composition prepared by the process according to claim 31.--

--35. (New) A medicament or medical product comprising a crosslinker-free, biopolymer composition prepared by the process according to claim 19.--

--36. (New) A cosmetic preparation comprising a crosslinker-free, biopolymer composition prepared by the process according to claim 19.--

--37. (New) A food additive comprising a crosslinker-free, biopolymer composition prepared by the process according to claim 19.--

Please cancel claims 1-18, without prejudice.